



Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park Traffic Impact Study and Subarea Transportation Plan



Traffic Impact Study and Subarea Transportation Plan

Stakeholder Participation Panel

December 8, 2003 – 1:30 p.m.

City of Fort Oglethorpe Offices

Meeting Notes

Attendees

Bebe Heiskell, Walker County Commissioner
John Culpepper, City of Chickamauga
Charles Crawford, GA Battlefields Association
Greg Kidd, National Parks Conservation Association
Ed Vickrey, Catoosa County
Ronnie Moore, Chattanooga Times-Free Press
Janet Cochran, Dalton CVB
Ron Gracy, Catoosa County Commissioner
W. Todd Groce, Georgia Historical Society
Gene Taylor, WGT & Associates
Gerald Sears, Sears Shoe Store
Max Azizi, Federal Highway Administration
Abigail Riveria, Federal Highway Administration
Debi Wilson, Fort Oglethorpe Downtown Development Authority
Alice Carson, Georgia Department of Industry, Trade, and Tourism
Olney Meadows, Catoosa County
Kay Parish, Friends of the Park
Ron Forster, Representative, District 3, Post 1
Patrick Reed, National Park Service – CCNMP
Sam Weddle, National Park Service – CCNMP
Jim Szykowski, National Park Service – CCNMP
Jim Ogden, National Park Service – CCNMP
Lisa Nielsen, National Park Service – CCNMP
Nola Chavez, National Park Service
Karen Rhodes, Chattanooga-Hamilton Regional Planning
David Howerin, Coosa Valley Regional Development Council
Annette Eason, Georgia Department of Transportation
Ulysses Mitchell, Georgia Department of Transportation
Andy Rikard, Georgia Department of Transportation
Rob Schiffer, Cambridge Systematics
Keli Paul, Cambridge Systematics
Marta Rosen, Day Wilburn Associates, Inc.
Kristen Wescott, Day Wilburn Associates, Inc.



Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park Traffic Impact Study and Subarea Transportation Plan



Welcome/Introductions

Pat Reed, Superintendent, CCNMP welcomed all the stakeholders to the meeting. He expressed the need for this plan to consider changes in the area 20 to 25 years from now and the needs within both study areas. He indicated the need and importance of protecting resources and ensuring the quality of the visitor experience within the Park as well as finding ways to increase Heritage tourism in the surrounding communities.

Annette Eason, Project Manager for GDOT encouraged all participants to listen and share ideas. She indicated that the analysis and needs would be presented during the meeting. The stakeholders' role was to assist in verifying needs and finding ways to resolve needs.

Marta Rosen, Project Manager, DWA began introductions of all the stakeholders present. She then presented the meeting agenda. The format for the meeting was to first present a summary of the study's purpose and an overview of what work has been accomplished to date. Then the quantitative and qualitative findings for the Traffic Impact Study and Subarea Transportation Plan would be presented. The meeting would conclude with discussion of the next project steps and present some potential alternatives for further examination. The presentation format was a Powerpoint presentation, and study area maps were also displayed.

Study Background

Marta Rosen presented the study background which included a discussion of the project's goals, established earlier in the process, a discussion of general trends in the study area as well as a summary of the activities conducted to date. The goals that have been developed for both study areas help establish target outcomes.

Activities that have been conducted to date include:

- A public meeting open house
- Two stakeholder meetings
- An extensive data collection effort
- Updating and refinement of the Chattanooga MPO MinUTP model to represent travel conditions and patterns in the study areas
- Identification of current and future needs and issues through qualitative and quantitative assessment

Traffic Impact Study

In the traffic impact study area, Marta Rosen said that the active participation from the stakeholders has helped develop an understanding of area issues. From both the public open house meeting, questionnaire, and stakeholder input, major issues include:

- Being prepared for expected area growth
- Economic development opportunities related to historic and cultural features in the area
- Traffic operations, safety, and congestion in some areas, especially during peak commuting times



Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park Traffic Impact Study and Subarea Transportation Plan



- Access from the US 27 relocation to the roadway network at Osburn Rd., Wilder Rd., and McFarland Gap Rd.
- Wayfinding throughout the area
- North-south connectivity to Chattanooga

Safety/Capacity

A profile of vehicular crashes within the study area was presented. Normalized crash rates were generated for major roadways. Roads identified with crash rates that exceed the statewide average include SR 146, Burning Bush Road, SR 1/US 27, SR 193, and SR 341.

A capacity analysis was conducted for both the existing conditions and for future forecasted conditions. Presently the greatest congestion appears on north-south roads (US 27/Chickamauga Ave, Page Rd./McBrien Rd, Schmidt Rd.) leading into Chattanooga, though Battlefield Pkwy/SR 2 also shows congestion. In the future, traffic volumes on major roadways are expected to nearly double. A travel time analysis conducted through the model indicated no difference in travel times between using the US 27 relocation or LaFayette Road from south of the Park to north of the Park.

Gateways

Kristen Wescott, DWA presented information on the gateway areas leading into the Battlefield Park. Primary gateways include LaFayette Road, McFarland Gap Road, and Reed's Bridge Road; secondary gateways include Alexander Bridge Road, the US 27 relocation, Lytle Road and Burning Bush Road; and other gateways include the West Chickamauga Creek and the City of Chickamauga. A number of improvements or interpretive enhancements are cited in existing plans. Development occurring in some of the gateway corridors may have an impact on the Park, both with increasing traffic as well as altering the view-sheds.

Subarea Transportation Plan

As with the Traffic Impact Study, issues within the Subarea have been identified through stakeholder and public input. Concerns and issues within the subarea include:

- A conflict between Park user traffic and community traffic
- Maintaining Park visitor experience
- LaFayette Road through the Park is still an attractive means to travel in the area, even if a motorist is not Park-bound
- The speed limits within the Park are either too slow or too fast
- More bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the Park area desired

Analysis Context

The methodology for understanding and ranking the relative importance of the Park roads was presented. The Park road sensitivity evaluation focused on five factors: association with the historic period, interpretive value, historic integrity, association with the auto tour route, and visitor experience. A fifteen point scale was used, and roads were categorized as either high,



Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park Traffic Impact Study and Subarea Transportation Plan



moderate, or low sensitivity. Sixty-six percent of the Park's approximately 28 miles of paved and unpaved roadways received the highest sensitivity rating.

Safety/Capacity

Marta Rosen discussed the road and parking capacity and safety findings within the Park subarea. Assuming a stable level of Park visitation and lower capacity standards, no apparent capacity issues were found for the current and future conditions. Different assumptions related to Park visitation and capacity will be examined in the next phase.

The number and rate of traffic incidents has declined since the relocation of US 27. No apparent parking deficiencies exist.

Summary of Findings

In the Traffic Impact Study area, US 27 has improved mobility in the area, but traffic operations, safety, and capacity improvements are needed in some areas. The road sensitivity analysis provided a better understanding of Park road sensitivity. Park visitor experience is impacted by excessive through-traffic.

Potential improvements/Next Steps

Keli Paul, Cambridge Systematics, presented an overview of the next phase of the study which will be testing possible alternatives in both study areas. Some of the alternatives will be tested through the refined model, particularly changes in road capacity and speed as well as the conversion of two-way facilities to one-way facilities. Other alternatives will be examined off-model such as traffic operations, wayfinding, street-scape, and using alternative modes within the Park. At this point in the study, what-if scenarios are being tested for their impacts both inside and outside the Park. All comments about possible impacts are important.

Traffic Impact Study Area possible alternatives include:

- US 27 extension from Battlefield Parkway terminus north to SR 146 (in Chattanooga's 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan)
- Widening of SR 146 from two to four lanes (in Chattanooga's 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan)
- North-South improvements east of Park or "Eastern" bypass
- Capacity improvements on US 27/LaFayette Rd. leading into Tennessee
- Battlefield Parkway capacity, geometrics (turn lanes) and/or timing improvements (signal optimization)
- Improved signage/wayfinding
- Pedestrian/streetscape improvements on LaFayette Road between Battlefield Parkway and Park

Subarea Transportation Plan possible alternatives include:

- Operational implications on capacity and safety at critical sensitive sights



Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park Traffic Impact Study and Subarea Transportation Plan



- Create one-way loop in Park in conjunction with expanded auto tour (Viniard-Alexander - Jay's Mill - Brotherton Rd)
- Speed modifications on LaFayette Road
- Parking and wayfinding improvements

Stakeholder Comments

- Catoosa County stakeholders would like the study team to consider the travel route impacts to the residents east of the Park that could occur with a one-way loop within the Park. There is significant residential development on Burning Bush Road, and many residents use Park roads to get to Ft. Oglethorpe.
- The regional representative from the Department of Tourism said the CCNMP was a major draw for visitors to the state. Any improvements to the Park, including enhanced services such as an expanded auto tour, might help bring visitors to the Park and the local area. Reducing some of the non-Park traffic by expanding the auto-tour route would likely benefit visitors.
- A comment was made that from a bicyclist perspective, one feels unsafe bicycling through the Park because of fast-moving, higher volume traffic.
- Has there been any consideration using the former Central Georgia railroad on the west side of the Park as a way to transport visitors between the City of Chickamauga and the battlefield?
- What consideration of alternative transportation has been made to connect Fort Oglethorpe, the battlefield, and Chickamauga? It could provide a way to link historic features inside and outside the battlefield, and provide an opportunity for enhanced interpretive presentation.
- There was a suggestion that parking be examined for "ease of use", especially at the pull-offs. Parking facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians/hikers either inside or outside the Park was recommended.
- There was a suggestion that Park trails be opened to bicyclists. Currently, bicyclists are not allowed on walking paths, just the roadways throughout the Park.
- There was an inquiry as to whether the Park could enhance enforcement of the existing speed limits on LaFayette Road within the Park. Has the study considered using speed humps on LaFayette?
- McFarland Gap Road/Old Highway 2 has lower speed limits and local area motorists might use it if it were improved. A better connection between McFarland Gap Road and Ft. Oglethorpe is needed. One suggestion was to shift the Park boundary to exclude this corridor.



Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park Traffic Impact Study and Subarea Transportation Plan



- What prior studies were examined? Does the current situation reflect previous forecasts? Walker County impacts were expected.
- Consider impacts on businesses, especially on LaFayette Road.
- The US 27 relocation has had a positive impact on the City of Chickamauga.
- A stakeholder raised concern about how the Park's goals and objectives have been used for the study. Project coordinating committee members responded that GDOT was asked to administer the study to ensure objectivity. Input from the Park is considered on par with other study stakeholders. In addition, it is essential to plan ahead and understand possible future impacts of growth and development on the Park and the surrounding communities.
- Commercial vehicle restrictions remain an issue in the Park. The standards are defined by federal regulations. There is some misunderstanding about the Park's commercial vehicle restrictions.

Marta Rosen concluded the meeting thanking everyone for their participation and input. The target for next stakeholder meeting is the end of January 2004 to present the tested alternatives.